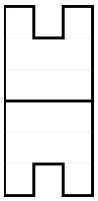
28. Great Excess

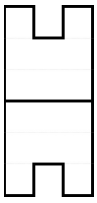


The Sequence - To be fed is to be nourished. Someone without nourishment will not be able to move, and this is why the Great Excess hexagram is next.

In general, after things are nourished, they can be brought to completion.

- Once they are complete, they can move, and once they move, they become excessive.
- And so the Great Excess hexagram succeeds the Feed hexagram.

The Symbol - The lake destroys the tree: Great Excess.



As for the trigrams, the Joy trigram is above and the Low trigram below.
- 'The lake' is above the tree and 'destroys the tree.'
- The word 'lake' refers to what soaks into and nourishes the tree, which is the meaning of the Great Excess hexagram.

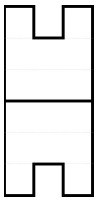
Here it reaches the point of destroying and consuming the tree, which is the meaning of the Great Excess hexagram.
- A great excess is an excess of yang, and this is why the hexagram refers to a greatness that is excessive, or the greatness of those who are excessive, together with great affairs that are excessive.

The word 'lake' refers to what soaks into and nourishes the tree.
- Here, it reaches the point of destroying and consuming the tree, and so its excess is extreme.
- This is why it refers to the Great Excess hexagram.

Noble people use it to **set themselves up alone** and **are not troubled**. They flee the times without despair.

When noble people gaze on the symbol of the **Great Excess** hexagram, **they** use it to **set up actions that greatly exceed those of other people**.
- Noble people greatly exceed other people **because they can** '**set themselves up alone and are not troubled**,' **and** '***flee the times*** without despair.'
- When the **world wrongs** them, they are **not concerned**: they **set** themselves **up alone** and are **not troubled**.
- Though the times do not see or recognize them, they are **without regret**: 'They flee the times without despair.'
- In a case like this, **they will afterward be able to guard themselves**, **and** so they will **greatly exceed other people**.

The **way and virtue possessed by sages and worthies**, **as well as their task** and vocation, **greatly exceed those of other people**, but in general, **affairs that greatly exceed the ordinary** are also like this.



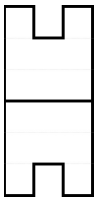
- As for **the sages** who **exhaust the human way**, they **do not exceed their principle, but use** the world's **straightforward** principle **in** their **control over** states of **affairs**.[1]
- When they are improving their fitting actions within *the moment*, **if they exceed** the **center slightly**, then **they will grasp it**.
- Such is the case of being '**excessively modest *when* doing** something (acting without need for rewards and personal aggrandizement)(opposite of 'extending one's own tassels'), **excessively sorrowful *when* deprived** of something (turning water into wine)(opposite of accepting less and less morality without complaints), and **excessively thrifty *when* employing** something (exercising virtues)(minimally)(opposite of immediately imposing major changes on others or oneself).'

In fact, there is a **small excess** in their **improvement**, but they can **afterward extend** themselves **to the center**, and **so they are *employing a search for* the center**.

- What is here called 'great excess' is greater than ordinary affairs, but it is not in excess of the principle.
- **It is** *only because it is* **great *that* it is not seen as ordinary**.
- It is seen as great **by comparison with** the **ordinary**, and **this is** why it is called '**great excess**.'

[1] "Above the mountain, there is thunder: Small Excess. Noble people use it to be excessively modest when acting on something, excessively sorrowful when deprived of something, and excessively thrifty when employing something." Small Excess (62), Symbol.

The Judgment - Great Excess: the greatness is excessive.



'The greatness is excessive' signifies that yang is excessive. In the case of affairs, it refers to ***the greatness of* the affairs that are excessive**, *as well as* to ***the greatness of* their excess**.

Greatness (size, amount, extent, intensity) of affairs (matters, concerns, and things to attend to):
- How great are the things; and
- Greatness of these matters being above the normal extent and intensity

Great Excess: the ridgepole is warped.

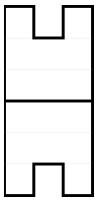
In the Small Excess hexagram, there is an excess of **yin** lines at **both the top** and the **bottom**.

In the Great Excess hexagram, there is an excess of **yang lines at the center**.
- Because there is an excess of yang lines at the center, both the top and bottom are weak.
- This is why the judgment refers to the symbol of the warped ridgepole.
- It chooses the ridgepole because of its **impressive weight**.

'The ridgepole is warped': the **root and the branches** are **weak**.

When four yang lines are gathered at the center of a hexagram, they may be said to have weight.
- The symbol of **the ridgepole** is chosen for both the third and the fourth yang lines, which signifies their **weighty command**.
- The word '**warped**' is chosen because both the **root** and the **branches** of the hexagram are **weak**.
- The **center is strong**, but the root and branches are weak.
- As a result, the hexagram is warped.

The Judgment is saying that the two yin lines, at **the top and bottom** of the hexagram, are **scarce and weak**.
- If the **yang** lines are **abundant**, then the yin lines will be scarce.
- This is why it refers to **greatness** that **is excessive**.
- In the case of the Small Excess hexagram, the Judgment says that 'the smallness is excessive,' indicating that yin is excessive.



Firmness is excessive but central.

The Judgment is **remarking on what is good about the powers** of the trigrams.

- **Although** the firm lines are **excessive**, the second and fifth lines have both **acquired centrality**.
- That is, they have **placed themselves without losing** the way of **centrality**.

There are **lowliness and** the act of **enjoyment**.

The Low trigram is below and the Joy trigram above.

- This is to put the **way of lowliness**, submissiveness, **harmony**, *and* **enjoyment** into action.

There is profit in a **long journey**, and also progress.

At the moment of the Great Excess hexagram, *the way of* centrality, lowliness, and enjoyment is put into action.

- This is why 'there is profit in a long journey,' and so ***there can be*** 'progress.'

The yin lines are weak, while the yang lines are strong.

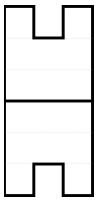
- **Noble** people are in **abundance**, while small people are scarce.
- This is why 'there is profit in a **long journey**, and also **progress**.'
- Today, people call the ridgepole **a crossbeam**.

How great is the moment of great excess!

In the moment of the Great Excess hexagram, **one's affairs** are **extremely great**, and this is why the Judgment applauds it, saying how great it is.

- For example, **setting up a great affair** that is **out of the ordinary**, gathering the **great accomplishment of a hundred generations**, or severing what is customary so as **to bring great virtues to completion** - **these are** all **affairs of** the **Great Excess** hexagram.

The second yang line: the dry poplar gives birth to roots below it. The old man and young woman are married.



The dry poplar[2] has withered, and now gives birth to roots.
- The word 'poplar' refers to a thing that is easily affected by yang qi.
- If the yang qi becomes excessive, then it will dry out.

The yang qi has become excessive but it has not yet reached its limit.

A complexity of flowers is born from the poplar's dry wildings.[3]
- The phrase 'dry wildings' signifies dry roots.
- The phrase 'wildings' is treated as 'weeds.'

In the second yang line, the yang qi has become excessive, but it agrees with the initial line, and it is symbolized by an old man and a young wife.

Nothing is without profit.

If an old man and a young woman are married, they are capable of bringing to completion the tasks of cultivating the soil and giving birth to life.
- The line statement does not remark on the good fortune of the second line.
- It remarks that 'nothing is without profit' at the start, which does not prematurely reach the point of good fortune.

The 'old man' and the 'young wife': their agreement with each other is excessive.

When an old man and a young wife submit to and enjoy one another, their agreement with each other exceeds their ordinary roles.[4]
- It signifies the harmony of the second yang line and the initial yin line - that is, yin and yang - in an agreement with each other that exceeds what is ordinary.

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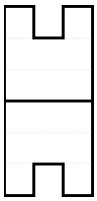
[2] A poplar is a fast growing tree with a straight trunk. A polar is a tree of the genus Populus. It grew in groves with other trees and symbolized solid life.

[3] A 'complexity of flowers' describes a possibility growing the roots of a poplar tree, or the roots of weeds.

[4] The old man excessively enjoys the agreement of a young wife, and the young woman is excessively submissive in her agreement to marry an old, rather than young, man.



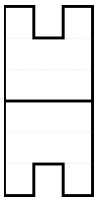
When a great excess of yang draws it close to yin, they will align.
- This is why the second and the fifth lines are both symbolized by giving birth.

It is proper that the second line, at the initiation of the Great Excess hexagram, acquire centrality and occupy a soft position.
- The second line is profoundly close to the initial line, and they agree with each other.
- Since the initial line has drawn quite close to the second, the second line in turn will no longer correspond to the higher, fifth line, and their agreement with each other should be recognized.

The second line acquires centrality, occupies a soft position, and agrees with the initial line.
- This is why it can, in its turn, give birth to roots, without the loss that comes at the limit of excess: 'Nothing is without profit.'
- In the Great Excess hexagram, it is good when a yang line occupies a yin position, which is the case for the second and fourth line.

The second line refers to people who are excessively firm, but who can place themselves at the center, and who employ softness to make the crossing together.
- If they were merely excessively firm, there would be nothing they could do - such is the case of the third yang line.
- But if they acquire centrality and softness, they will be able to complete the task of the Great Excess hexagram - such is the case of the second yang line.

The third yang line: the ridgepole is warped.



As for those who occupy the moment of the Great Excess hexagram, they are gathered to tasks of great excess, and they set up affairs of great excess.

- If their firmness and softness do not acquire centrality, or if they choose not to be assisted by other people, they will not be capable of them.

If they are excessively firm and strong, they will be unable to be the same as ordinary people in their ordinary tasks, and will at the same time be unable to set themselves up alone.

- What will the case be like for affairs of great excess?

Since those with the power of sages will necessarily choose to be assisted by other people even in small affairs, this should also be recognized in the case of those facing great command over the world.

The misfortune of the warped ridgepole: there can be no assistance.

If it is excessively firm and strong, it will not be able to acquire anything from other people, and they will also not be able to relate to or assist it.

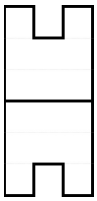
- It is like a ridgepole that is warped or broken and cannot be propped up or assisted.
- The ridgepole is properly at the center of the house, and nothing may be attached to help it: 'there can be no assistance.'

The third yang line makes use of yang in the moment of great excess, it uses firmness to occupy a position by itself, it does not acquire centrality and it refers to those with an extreme excess of firmness.

- If those with an extreme excess of firmness make a move, they will draw back from centrality and harmony, and will brush off the hearts of the crowd.
- How could they face command over the Great Excess hexagram?

This is why they are not victorious in their command, like warped ridgepoles that cause the collapse and defeat of the house.

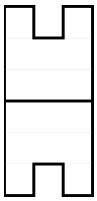
- As a result, 'there is misfortune.'
- The ridgepole is chosen as their symbol because they are without assistance and cannot be victorious in their weighty command.



Someone asks: since the third line belongs to the Low trigram substance and corresponds to the top line, why not employ a symbol that is soft?

- Response: when remarking on the Book of Changes, it is estimable to understand the weight or lightness of the propensities, and the alteration or change of the moments.
- The third line employs firmness while occupying a position that is excessive.
- When lowliness has come to an end and is altering, how could one employ the meaning of softness?
- The correspondence of the lines signifies that their tendencies attend to each other.
- When the third line is starting to become excessively firm, will the top line be able to bind up its tendency?

The fourth yang line: the ridgepole is ample. There is good fortune.



The fourth line occupies a position near the ruler and refers to those who face command over the Great Excess hexagram.

To occupy a soft position indicates that it is able to employ softness in making the crossing.

- Since it is not excessively firm, it will be able to be victorious in its command, like a ridgepole that is ample and raised up.
- As a result, there will be 'good fortune.'

The good fortune of an ample ridgepole: it does not warp at the bottom.

The phrase 'ample and raised up' is chosen to mean that it does not descend because of warping.

- If the ridgepole is ample and raised up, there will be good fortune.
- It is not warped or twisted at the bottom, which signifies that it does not descend to bind itself to the initial line.

If it possesses another, there is dismay.

In the moment of the Great Excess hexagram, one cannot make the crossing without yang firmness.

- Since it uses firmness to place itself in a soft position, it has acquired what is fitting.
- If it were to go on and correspond to the initial yin line, it would be excessive.

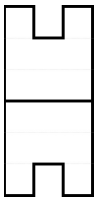
Its firmness and softness have acquired what is fitting, but its tendency is to correspond to the yin line: 'it possesses another.'

- If it possesses another, it possesses a burden on its firmness.
- Although it does not reach the point of great harm, there should still be dismay.

In fact, in the moment of the Great Excess hexagram, it is movement that causes the excess.

- The phrase 'it possesses another' signifies that it possesses another tendency, while 'dismay' has the meaning of insufficiency and signifies that it should lessen it.[5]

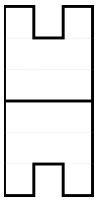
[5] If the fourth line possesses another, it possesses a burden on its firmness. Although it does not reach the point of great harm, there should still be insufficiencies and the fourth line should lessen the possession of another in order to lessen the burdens on its firmness.



Someone asks: when the second line is close to the initial line, 'nothing is without profit,' but when the fourth line corresponds to the initial line, 'there is dismay.' Why is this?

- Response: the second is close to the initial line while acquiring centrality, which means that they use softness to make the crossing together.
- The fourth line corresponds straightforwardly to the initial line, and so their tendencies are bound to each other.
- Since a yang line occupies the fourth position, firmness and softness have acquired what is fitting.
- If it were guided and bound by the yin line, doing harm to its firmness, then there should be dismay.

The fifth yang line: the dry poplar gives birth to flowers above it. The old woman acquires a young husband.



The fifth yang line faces the moment of the Great Excess hexagram, and it uses centrality and straightforwardness at its root to occupy the position of respect.

- Nonetheless, it has no corresponding line to help it from below,[6] and it certainly cannot complete the task of the Great Excess hexagram.

The fifth line is close to the yin line at the limit of excess above it, and they make the crossing together, just like a 'dry poplar' that 'gives birth to flowers above it.'

- When the dry poplar has given birth to roots of another poplar tree, weeds, or other forms of flowers below it, it can return to life.
- If it gives birth to flowers or foliage above it, they will not add anything to alleviate its dryness even after they are revealed.

'The dry poplar gives birth to flowers above it': how should it continue?

The dry poplar does not give birth to roots below it, but to flowers above it.

- Since it will return in its cycle to dryness, how could this continue?
- When an old woman acquires a young husband, how could they complete the tasks of cultivating the earth and giving birth to life?

The top yin line, a yin line at the limit of excess, refers to the 'old woman.'

- Although the fifth line does not depend on the top for anything, and this is why the old woman is said to acquire a young husband instead of it being said that the young man acquires an old wife.

There is neither blame nor praise.

When a yin line at the limit of excess crosses through it together with a yang line, it is not considered to be adding anything to itself.

- Even though there is nothing criminal or blameworthy about a young man acquiring an old wife, it is peculiar and there is nothing beautiful about it.
- This is why the line statement says 'there is neither blame nor praise.'

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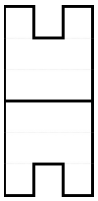
[6] "Since the initial line has drawn quite close to the second, the second line in turn will no longer correspond to the higher, fifth line, and their agreement with each other should be recognized.



A ‘young husband’ and an ‘old woman’: this, too, may be uncultured and unrefined.

The Symbol, in turn, remarks that this ‘may be uncultured and unrefined.’

- Since the birth of flowers above do not add to the dry poplar roots, ‘this, too,’ is why it ‘may be uncultured and unrefined.’